

**City Council of the Mayor and Council of New Castle**  
**Workshop Session**  
**Presentation of Waterfront Concept Information**  
**New Castle School Auditorium – 903 Delaware Street – New Castle**  
**Tuesday – January 5, 2012 – 6 p.m.**

**Present:**

Council President William Barthel  
Councilperson John Cochran  
Councilperson John Gaworski  
Councilperson Ted Megginson  
Councilperson Teel Petty

President Barthel said the meeting is a Council workshop.

Planning Commission Chair David Bird provided opening remarks and gave an overview of the speakers. He said one concern was small boat traffic on the Delaware River. At this point they have decided to forgo having small boat access to the dock, with the exception of the fireboat and other emergency boats, pending further study.

Hickman Roland, a New Castle resident and tug boat operator on the Delaware River, discussed possible waterfront locations for accessibility. He was asked by the group to analyze the waterfront in New Castle in terms of where a dock facility could be located. He looked principally at where the water was and where there was enough water without any dredging. He went through a presentation showing soundings taken on the river. He looked at various locations, including Bull Hill and the old ferry location, on the river. The site off Delaware Street and the old dock off Battery Park are the only feasible locations. Councilperson Gaworski asked if the analysis was done at high or low tide.

Mr. Roland said they were done at low tide.

President Barthel asked whether, given his 40 years on the river, Mr. Roland considers the river treacherous or unsafe.

Mr. Roland said absolutely not. He can only think of three or four boats in trouble in 40 years. Councilperson Megginson asked if there is any chance some of the areas under consideration will fill in.

Mr. Roland said he does not think it is going to go from 35 feet to 2 feet in the next 50 years. The area is somewhat self-scouring.

Kalmar Nyckel Captain Lauren Morgens has been driving the ship since spring 2007. May 2006 was the last visit to New Castle. She described some challenges the old dock presented to the Kalmar Nyckel. It was a logistical challenge. Also it was not sturdy enough for a ship the size of the Kalmar Nyckel. They also could not stay for long because there was no potable water. A larger, wider dock would make it more usable for events. She said there are some issues with the River currents at the old location. She described the issues and how the proposed dock would address some of the issues.

President Barthel asked how many times per season the ship might come to New Castle. He also asked about the fee structure such as docking fees.

Captain Morgens said she envisions the ship visiting multiple times. She said generally docking fees are waived for non-profit organizations. The idea is that the ship brings something to the community it visits. They do work with towns to bring programming and events. Moving the dock to the end of Delaware Street, it is hoped it would give the opportunity to visit all day. That will require some study. It would be safer and more logistically viable.

Mr. Bird asked how many crew and passengers.

Captain Morgens said generally 15 to 20 crew, but anywhere from eight to 31. The ship can carry 49 people on a day trip.

Catherine Parsells, executive director of the Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, said they are very enthusiastic about returning to New Castle and about the new dock. It would be positive for the organization and for the City. Any active waterfront adds to the vitality of the community, including attracting visitors to add to the economic development. It would be the only dock in Northern Delaware where the ship can sail wide open. It is also a spot they could use for uprigging. The dock would also be very attractive to other ships. Lots of other ships pass by. Its mission is education and would like to offer educational programs. It would like to be there for a week in May for programs. Also when possible participate in Day in Old New Castle to be a feature; also for Art on the Green. Also when they stop for uprigging try to build events in conjunction with that. Also they would want to be in the City for a week in September.

Councilperson Cochran asked if the organization has access to grants for the construction of docks.

Ms. Parsells said they do not.

Mr. Megginson asked about doing a dry run to gauge the currents in that area.

Captain Morgens suggested it be done with a smaller boat that can do multiple runs.

Mr. Roland said they can do that. He concurs with the captain that a Delaware Street dock would work as far as the currents.

Diane Laird, state coordinator of Downtown Delaware, talked about economic development. Her office administers the Main Street program, of which the Historic New Castle Alliance is an affiliate. She provided information on the downtown development process. She outlined the importance of downtown development. The market will define the downtown unless the community is proactive. She also gave an overview of the Historic New Castle Alliance. She pointed to several other communities that have spent money on waterfront efforts that the City could look at for more information.

President Barthel asked whether any of the studies referred to by Ms. Laird had been used for the concept plan or if they could be used.

Mr. Bird said that had not been done but could be done moving forward.

Ms. Laird said what other communities have found could prove helpful in learning from their experiences and whether it was viewed as worthwhile. She said the riverfront is a tremendous asset, developed appropriately.

Karl Kalbacher, director of economic development for New Castle County, talked about some opportunities to obtain money for the proposed riverfront development. One program was a federal program from the Federal Highway Administration that would focus on non-motorized transportation. It

does require a 20 percent local funding requirement. Another new program being developed by New Castle County is competitive grants with a 50 percent match. Another one is the Delaware Community Redevelopment Fund which suburban street funds and volunteer labor can be used as a match. It is a 40-60 match, with the State providing 40 percent of the funds. This has not been funded by the state in recent years but could be. He also explained the Route 9 and 13 Corridor Economic Development Plan which is being embarked on. One of the goals is expanding tourism. The study is being initiated this year.

James Wilson, executive director of Bike Delaware, talked about interest from biking enthusiasts to get access to Delaware and New Jersey across the river. In addition, he talked about efforts to expand bike trails throughout Delaware and New Castle County. The Wilmington/New Castle Industrial Track will bring thousands of bicyclists each year when completed. Andrea Trabelsi, director of programs and Northern Delaware coordinator for Delaware Greenways, expanded on those and additional efforts, which can enhance the community.

Steve Barnes, owner of Wilmington tour boat, the Riverboat Queen, said the boat currently is docked in Wilmington. It is in its fifth year of operation. It can carry 120 people. It can run out of Wilmington with a package to New Castle, such as visit the City or shop in the City, for a day. It also could run tours out of New Castle. It does require a floating dock. If the City built a dock it could come in.

Councilperson Gaworski asked about the operating season.

Mr. Barnes said it is from April until the end of October.

David Majewski, Good Will Fire Co. board of directors and past fire chief, said Good Will is excited about the project and concept. They are excited about keeping the fire rescue boat in the water 10 or 11 months of the year. The boat for years has been coming out of the Third Street garage. The ramp is still susceptible to extreme low tides. Also with big crowds at Battery Park it is difficult to get boat to the ramp. A pilot program back in the mid-to-late 1990s with the boat at the engineer's pier showed it took almost 15 minutes off the response time. Fifteen minutes is a huge amount of time for people in distress. A boat kept in the water would reduce the necessary crew for a launch from five to two or three persons. That would help response time as well.

Mr. Bird provided an overview on the timeline going forward. The draft of the concept plan has been referred to City Council for approval of the concept. The next step would be action by City Council. If Council adopts the concept plan, the next step would be to apply for funding for preliminary engineering and permitting process. As part of a study there would be study of the old dock, new dock and costs for each. Part of the process would be finding money for the engineering and permitting process. Finding funding would be a six- to 12-month process. The next stage would be design. The final stage would be construction. There are multiple City Council approvals and needs to find funding in each stage. The entire process is expected to take two to three years. The project will require other funding than the City.

Councilperson Cochran said everyone needs to go home and think about the ideas people spoke about tonight. He agreed with what Ms. Laird said, that a lot of cities would love to have the water assets that New Castle has.

President Barthel said by his count it would come back to Council 10 to 12 times for approval. It also would have public hearings.

Mr. Bird said each stage would require Council action.

Councilperson Petty said that because the City changes Council so much is there any way this project won't be dropped by a future Council.

Mr. Bird said each City Council takes certain actions.

President Barthel opened the meeting to questions from the public.

Janet Koczak said she feels much more comfortable after hearing all the speakers. She loved seeing the Kalmar Nyckel when it did visit. She asked whether the different needs for docks outlined by the different boats have been addressed by the concept.

Capt. Morgens said the Kalmar Nyckel has been involved from the start so they can strive for a dock that works for everyone. That is likely a floating dock. She discussed other technical aspects of a system.

Mr. Bird said those aspects would be part of a more detailed design.

Jack Klingmeyer, of West 13<sup>th</sup> Street, said the presentations seemed more like a sales pitch for the Kalmar Nyckel and others. He asked what is the purpose of this. Is it to promote jobs? He doesn't see anyone talking about costs, funding or jobs. What is the benefit to the City of New Castle? How many more people are going to come to New Castle by boat? There is no place to launch a boat for residents. Did the Planning Commission do any critical study? What is the impact on citizens of New Castle?

Bill Simpson asked if it was not the next stage of work to identify the answers to the items Mr. Klingmeyer just asked about.

Mr. Bird said it was. It is part of the Planning Commission mission to implement the plan. The City has to start with a basic plan and then do additional studies. He knows everyone would like to have more definite plans and dollars and cents attached but the City has to start somewhere.

An unidentified resident ask about the plan for parking. That is her main concern about the plan.

Mr. Bird said part of the Planning Commission's agenda this year is a parking study. The City did not budget any money for that so the Planning Commission went to WILMAPCO, which is going to do a parking study. Mr. Simpson is heading the subcommittee of the Planning Commission related to that study.

Karen Hurley-Heyman said she thinks the educational aspects are wonderful. She asked why the economic development of Main Street is good for the general population who have no stake in that. She asked: What is the benefit of the whole concept? What is the advantage to the citizenry? She wants to know why the Council won't listen to people like her. She does not like the idea that economic development is good for her.

Mr. Bird said that within the area of New Castle there is an area that is zoned commercial. The development of commercial is within that district. The other aspect of it is quality of life.

Karen Heyman said she does not want to see big trucks in the City. That is not good for her.

Mr. Bird said there is an aspect of commerce that is necessary for business. It is up to the City to make sure how that works.

Fred Gallagher asked what is the plan for ongoing maintenance. He is not aware of grants for ongoing maintenance.

Mr. Bird said that is something that has to be addressed by additional studies.

Mr. Gallagher said somebody is going to have to pay for it.

Mr. Bird said the study may determine user fees; another example would be like the Delaware City dock, which is maintained by the State.

Michael Heyman said City Council should have had a workshop for opponents. It has given the supporters five workshops. He is disappointed by the people appointed by the State. They have to realize it is a very controversial proposal. The residents do not want to be revitalized and don't want New Castle to become like cities such as Annapolis. The only way to find out what the people want is a non-binding referendum. The City can afford a referendum or time it with the general election. It is huge project that is going to change the face of the town.

Larry Coppenger said he is a boater. It is an issue of divided opinion and agreed a non-binding referendum should take place. His feeling is it would overwhelmingly fail. He suggested the Council create a corporation that would partition the City from any liability.

Councilperson Cochran made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilperson Gaworski seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Dickinson  
New Castle City Clerk